



The President James K. Polk State Historic Site

The Young Hickory News

Spring 2010

Volume 11, Issue 1

Second Saturdays: Arts, Fun and Hands-On Heritage

This summer the President James K. Polk State Historic Site will collaborate with other historic sites and museums all over the Tar Heel State to present Second Saturdays. This new program is being launched by the Department of Cultural Resources and gives artists an opportunity to showcase their work at more than 30 state historic sites and museums. This initiative will give local artists an opportunity to sell their work, broaden their audiences and make connections with a larger community. Second Saturdays will be held on June 12, July 10 and August 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Each historic site and museum has selected different themes for their Second Saturday programs.

June 12: We will begin the series with *Shaping the Past: The Form and Function of Pottery*. Museum staff and volunteers will look at the importance of red ware and various types of pottery used in the everyday lives of early Mecklenburg County settlers. Members of the Catawba Indian nation and various local potters and merchants will be on hand to showcase their works.

July 10: *The Art of Music in the Mid Nineteenth Century* will feature various types of music that would have been popular during President James K. Polk's administration, from classical to folk, and visitors will get the chance to try their hand at making music. Local musicians and instrument makers will be invited to participate.

August 14: *Threading the Story: The Form and Function of Spinning and Weaving* will finish up the series. This program focuses on the process of creating textiles from cotton to yarn to clothing. Staff will interpret the various steps involved in the fabric-making process. Visitors will learn about spinning, weaving, knitting and dyeing. Local weavers, quilters, spinners and textile makers will be invited.

We hope you will join us this summer for a truly unique experience. For more information about our programs, contact Courtney Rounds. To learn more about various Second Saturday programs throughout the state, please visit www.ncarts.org

Courtney Rounds



An example of Catawba Indian Potter
Image: www.danandmary.com

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Volunteers demonstrate the process of spinning cotton.

Photograph: Courtney Rounds

From The Manager's Desk



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Site Hours:
Tuesday-Saturday,
9am-5pm

Closed Sunday &
Monday

State Holidays:
April 2
May 31
July 5

*The Young Hickory News is
a semiannual publication
of the President James K. Polk
State Historic Site and the Polk
Support Fund, Inc.*

*Sharon VanKuren, President
Mark Dappart, Vice President
Ben Pelton, Treasurer
Katrina Ford, Secretary
Don Wood, Membership*

Greetings everyone and happy spring! I hope this issue of *The Young Hickory News* finds you well and enjoying the beautiful spring time weather.

Looking back over my article from last spring, I realize that things have not changed very much over a course of a year. We are still recovering from a weakened economy and we continue to hear of cutbacks everywhere. With all that being said, we are moving forward and continuing to make this the best historic site in all of North Carolina.

We have experienced some ups and downs this past winter. The saddest news is that we lost our two temporary part-time staff members, Bob Bemis and Mary Woodward. Bob has welcomed a bouncing baby boy to his family. Between that and working on his master's degree, he understandably has his hands full. Welcome to fatherhood, Bob! Mary has left us to move to Massachusetts. Mary brought to us a wealth of museum experience and her input over the past year and a half or so has been invaluable. We are all going to miss her tremendously.

Although we have faced some tough staff departures, I am also pleased to announce the return of a former intern, Jaime Torres, as our new part-time staff member. Jamie served with us as an intern last summer through the North Carolina Museums Council Summer Internship program. She did a great job for us and we are excited to have her return to the Polk family. We also welcome new board member Katrina Ford as secretary of the Polk Memorial Support Group, Inc. executive board. She has a wealth of non-profit experience and I know she will be a great addition to the support group. Read more about her on page 5.

Speaking of additions, we have added (or should I say, "updated") two things



Site Manager Scott Warren
Photograph: Courtney Rounds

recently here at the site. The first is our Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) wayside at the DAR monument. It was in dire need of repair and through the generosity of two local DAR chapters, we have been able to replace it. Read more about it on page 5. The second is our new flagpole at the visitors center. This was made possible by the Charlotte Junior Woman's Club (CJWC), which funded the placement of the original flag pole in 1969. What a great donation! Thank you to the members of the CJWC. Please read our article on page 3.

If you have not already, I would encourage you to sign up for or renew your membership today. Your membership dollars go toward publishing the newsletter, as well as funding craft supplies and lunches for the campers at our upcoming three summer day camps (see page 3 for more information). Joining or renewing couldn't be easier. Just fill out the membership form on page 7 and mail it to us today.

Thank you all for your continued support of what we do here. It could not be possible without your help. Have a great spring and I hope to see you at the site soon!

Scott Warren

Summer Day Camps Are Coming

This summer the President James K. Polk S.H.S. will be offering its series of one-day summer camps for children. For the past several years our camps have grown in popularity and we have seen campers return year after year. In many cases our campers go on to become counselors and volunteers! This year we are hoping to surpass last year's numbers, when hosted more 35 children. They learned how to make soap, play period baseball, make their own toys and cook their own lunch over an open hearth.

On July 19, we will be offering the camp titled, *A Day on the Farm*, where children learn about life in Mecklenburg County during the year 1803. Children will participate in several activities that simulate the types of chores young James Polk would have done.

On July 26, we will introduce our newest camp, *Mecklenburg County Settlers*. Children will experience life as an early pioneer of Mecklenburg County. They will try their hand at land surveying, panning for gold, building a portion of a log cabin and preparing lunch over a campfire. Staff members look forward to introducing this new program and believe the children will be very excited to participate.

Our last camp of the summer is *Life as a Young Soldier*, held on August 2. Campers will learn about the Mexican War and the countless young men from North Carolina who enlisted in the United States Army from 1846 to 1848. Participants will drill, train and eat just like an enlisted soldier during the Mexican War.

Each camp is open to boys and girls 8-12 years old. Camps are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and cost only \$35 per child. Space is limited, so please call us today to reserve your child's spot in one of these camps. Call Courtney Rounds or Scott Warren for more details at 704-889-7145.



Volunteer Drew Barrett teaches campers about the militia
Photograph: Courtney Rounds

Courtney Rounds

Flags Fly Atop the Site's New Flagpole

On August 17, 1969 The Charlotte Junior's Woman's Club gifted the site with a flagpole placed in front of the museum's visitors center. Forty years of weather has taken its toll on the flagpole. By 2007 the steel pole and pulleys had rusted, the paint had started to flake and the cleat was damaged. Even as the museum and historic buildings had gone through renovation, the flagpole remained unchanged. But history repeated itself when the Charlotte Junior Woman's Club stepped in to support the site.

Members voted to donate a new flagpole to the site in February. On March 21, the old flagpole was removed and a new one was installed. The new flagpole is located in the green space beside the visitors center. Staff and visitors are excited to see our nation and state flags flying high over the President James K. Polk S.H.S. once again.

The staff would like to thank The Charlotte Junior Woman's Club for their generous contribution and we invite everyone to come out to see the newest addition to our ever-growing site.

Courtney Rounds



New Flagpole
Photograph: Courtney Rounds

From the Kitchen

Good fires, pleasant aromas and lovely presentations: These things fill the kitchen house at the President James K. Polk State Historic Site. For the past 12 years, this kitchen has been the "home base" for a unique group of ladies who are always dressed in full period costume. We have frequently led school tours and participated in special events at the Polk Site. We have offered our expertise and training to docents from different sites who wish to learn from us. Teaching authentic hearth cooking skills is our main goal. This past year one of our guild members took over the planting and care of the Polk kitchen garden by planting herbs, vegetables that were eaten during the Polk's years in Mecklenburg County. The guild is now enjoying the fruits from the labor of love.

Lately we have prepared dishes of German, Pennsylvania Dutch and Huguenot and, of course, Scots Irish heritage. We strive to follow the "receipts" closely so that we can properly taste these 18th and early 19th century food flavors. Research is ongoing. At each meeting, we learn something new. It can be a technique used or perhaps using a different herb or the use of spirits to flavor these dishes. This spring we will be at Rural Hill near Huntersville for outdoor cooking. Also planned is a road trip to the Polk Home in Tennessee. We are excited about the possibility of cooking in the Polk kitchen.

All of us are volunteers who must pass a rigorous training trial period and then be able to prepare a presentation in front of the guild members before becoming an official member. These are people who love to share their knowledge and various skills of the backcountry North Carolina. Stop by and see us in action every second and forth Thursday from 9 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

Sharon VanKuren



A sampling of foods prepared by the Cooking Guild

Photograph: Courtney Rounds

Volunteer Orientation

Saturday April 17, 2010, 11 a.m.—2 p.m.

Who was Polk? Did you know that one of the most accomplished presidents in American history was born in Mecklenburg County? If you would like to know more about our 11th President of the United States, we have a great opportunity for you.

We are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers of all ages, backgrounds and talents who can share their time with us. A few hours a week or even a few hours a month is all you need to make friends and support your community!

The site will be hosting a volunteer orientation on Saturday, April 17, 2010 from 11 a.m. -2 p.m. This is a great opportunity for new volunteers to get acquainted with the site and for our veterans to refresh their memories! We will be giving an overview of our tour information, updating everyone on all of our site projects, and much more.

We hope you will join us. Please call Courtney Rounds to RSVP.

The White House Rose Garden



Rose Garden
Image:
www.whitehousemuseum.org

The White House Rose Garden was established in 1913 by Ellen Louise Axon Wilson, wife of Woodrow Wilson on the site of the previous colonial garden established with first Lady Edith Roosevelt in 1902. Over the years, the garden has been used for several events.

Woodrow Wilson would meet there for informal meetings with the press. John F. Kennedy welcomed Project Mercury astronauts. Countless press conferences have taken place in the garden. More than 30 different types of tulips and grape hyacinth are planted in the flower beds that are framed and crisscrossed with boxwood. Lavender cotton, planted in the shape of diamonds, surrounds the crabapple trees.

Courtney Rounds

Wayside Exhibit Receives Facelift

When pulling into the shade of trees leading up to the President James K. Polk State Historic Site, many visitors notice a beautiful monument to their left. Not many venture down to this marker of history, but those who have may have noticed the toll that time and weather has taken on the accompanying exhibit over the years. Visitors to this beautiful monument missed out in its full importance because much of the information accompanying it could not be read.

The exhibit received a long-overdue face lift as part of an internship project at the Polk site last summer. The display has been remounted, and new information has been added. We spent several months researching the minutes from the chapter that dedicated the monument. After visiting the archives at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, we discovered pages of information about the construction, dedication and celebration of the 1904 Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) monument for the birthplace of James K. Polk. With the help of local DAR Regent, Courtney Layne, articles of the rebuilding and rededication were found intact from the 1960s, and minutes from 1904 were also available. Maria David, a librarian from the Charlotte Observer, also helped out by finding old photographs of the monument. We could not begin to thank her enough.

We hope you come by the site to see our new wayside exhibit. It tells a fascinating story!



Monument and new wayside panel
Photograph: Courtney Rounds

Jaime Torres & Scott Warren



New Face: Katrina Ford
Photograph: Katrina Ford

Welcome Katrina Ford to the Polk Support Group

Katrina Whelchel Ford has joined the Polk Support Group as acting secretary. She is the Administrative Director for the Junior League of Charlotte and an active volunteer in many local historic organizations. She sits on the Board of Directors for Historic Charlotte, Inc., is a docent at the Charlotte Museum of History and a member of the Mecklenburg Historical Association. She is also currently the Secretary for the Charlotte Regional History consortium. Katrina's other passions include yoga, traveling, reading, gardening and cooking. She lives with her husband, Gary, and their faithful companion, Chester the Wonder Dog.

Katrina Ford

Check Us Out!

The President James K. Polk S.H.S.
is now on

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/JamesKPolkSHS>

Twitter

<http://twitter.com/JKPolkSHS>

Myspace

<http://www.myspace.com/503028485>

The Young Hickory Chapter of THJHA Launches

Since 1953, the organization known as the Tar Heel Junior Historian (THJHA) has been encouraging the study of local and state history by North Carolina's young people. Students from grades 4 through 12 can form a chapter. Tar Heel Junior Historians have made significant contributions to their communities, and in doing so, they learn about themselves.

Members of the THJHA have received national recognition for their achievements. Several members participate in North Carolina History Day in Raleigh, NC. This convention has several competitions in which students present papers, exhibits and documentaries. Surprisingly, there were only two active clubs in Mecklenburg County. The staff at the President James K. Polk S.H.S. are excited to introduce the third chapter of THJHA, appropriately named the Young Hickory Chapter. This chapter will be closely tied to the President James K. Polk State Historic Site and will participate in a variety of hands-on activities, including educational programs, aiding with special events and helping with clean up around the site. This newest batch of Tar Heel historians comprise 13 home school children age 8 to 15 from around the Charlotte area. We are excited to welcome them to the growing Polk Site family.

Our first meeting last month focused on the Polk site and family. Club members took an in-depth tour of the site and museum. The theme of our next meeting will focus on gardening in the early 19th century. Volunteer Patti Veal will teach club members about the importance of the kitchen garden. We will round out the day by making soap.

For anyone who is interested in joining, the Young Hickory Chapter meet the second Friday of every month at 2:30 p.m. For more information about the Young Hickory Chapter of THJHA, please contact Courtney Rounds.

Courtney Rounds

Goodbye and Good Luck to Mary Woodward

I'm still not quite sure I believe this, but I have to bid the President James K. Polk State Historic Site (and my snappy royal blue uniform shirts) "goodbye." My husband and I are relocating to Chelmsford, Massachusetts, which is near Lexington and Concord, just outside of Boston.

Admittedly, when I first came to work at the Polk in September, 2008, my knowledge of President Polk and the history of his era was not extensive. Of course, it's still not but I have learned enough to be intrigued with the early life of the area's backcountry pioneers. I remain especially interested in the early roads that ran through the area and the boundaries of the original Polk farm and I hope that the research I have helped conduct will one day be available to all of our visitors.

I am looking forward to finding another challenging position at a historic site or house museum in Massachusetts. And while my knowledge of early American history is also not extensive, I have learned one fact that I'm sure will amuse and possibly irritate my new Yankee colleagues: there were more Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes fought in South Carolina than in the other colonies.

Many thanks, y'all!

Mary Woodward



Mary talks about holiday traditions in the main house

Photograph: Courtney Rounds

Special Events for 2010

May 4 *Movie Night at the Polk Site.* This is the third in a series of movie nights presented by the President James K. Polk State Historic Site and the Polk Memorial Support Fund Inc. Our third movie screening will feature the 1988 movie "Eight Men Out," which tells the story of the Black Sox scandal during the 1919 World Series. This film is rated PG. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Admission: **Free**

June 12 *Second Saturday: Shaping the Past: The Form and Function of Pottery.* Museum staff and volunteers will look at the importance of red ware and various types of pottery in the everyday lives of early Mecklenburg County settlers. Participating in this event are members of the Catawba Indian nation and various local potters and merchants. This program will feature hands on demonstrations in the historic area and a market behind the museum where local artists will sell their work. 10 a.m.—4 p.m. Admission: **Free**

July 10 *Second Saturday: The Art of Music in the Mid Nineteenth Century.* This program will feature various types of music that would have been popular during President James K. Polk's administration. The focus will vary from classical to folk music and visitors will get the chance to try their hand at making music. Local musicians and instrument makers will be on hand. 10 a.m.—4 p.m. Admission: **Free**

July 19, 26 & August 2 *Polk Summer Day Camps.* Throughout July and August, we will host a series of day camps for children, ages 8-12. These one-day camps will use living history to teach campers about daily life on the Polk farm from 1795-1806, the Mexican War 1846-1848 and the life of early Mecklenburg County pioneers. Pre-registration is required. Admission: **\$35 per camper.**

August 14 *Second Saturday: Threading the Story: The Form and Function of Spinning and Weaving.* This program will focus on the process of textiles from cotton to yarn to clothing. Staff will interpret the various steps that are involved in the fabric making process. Visitors will learn about spinning, weaving, knitting and dyeing. Weavers, spinners, quilters and textile makers will be on hand to display and sell their work. 10 a.m.—4 p.m. Admission: **Free**

September 4 *Sarah Childress Polk Day.* Join us as we celebrate the birthday of First Lady Sarah Childress Polk. We will host a tea part and make our own teacups. Learn about the life of this truly remarkable woman who outlived her husband by 42 years! 11 a.m.—1 p.m. There is a materials fee of **\$3 per child**

Polk Support Fund, Inc.
* **Application for Membership**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____ E-mail _____

Please check membership category:

☐ Congressman (\$20/year) ☐ Governor (\$25/year) ☐ Speaker of the House (\$40/year)

☐ President (\$100) ☐ Lifetime Member (\$1,795) ☐ Memorial/Honor Gift Amount \$

Name of Honoree _____

**The President James K. Polk
State Historic Site**

12031 Lancaster Highway
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Phone: 704-889-7145

We're on the Web!

www.polk.nchistoricsites.org



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There are no extra steps and no added costs. Just go to **www.shopformuseums.com**, choose **The President James K. Polk SHS** and start shopping! There are more than 400 retailers partnered with the site.

Check out ShopforMuseums.com today to see the extensive list of impressive stores. Moreover, you can even save money when you shop with exclusive sales, coupons and other deals. Just remember to start at **www.shopformuseums.com** for your donation to count!